University of Alberta

Preparation of Alberta Postsecondary Vocational Instructors

by

Ralph David Walker ©

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this qualitative inquiry was to examine teacher preparation from the perspectives of instructors and government officials actively engaged in postsecondary vocational education in Alberta. A semi-structured interview method was used to address the research question. The respondent group consisted of five postsecondary vocational instructors and three officials from Alberta Learning knowledgeable about postsecondary vocational instruction. Data were analyzed deductively and inductively.

The findings from this study showed that a person's occupational background served as the pivotal reason for being hired as a postsecondary vocational instructor in Alberta. Participants believed that specialized occupational knowledge provided the foundation from which postsecondary vocational instructors learned to become teachers. The findings are consistent with and supported by the literature on the preparation of postsecondary vocational instructors in North America. A number of conclusions and recommendations based on the findings are also presented.

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Preparation of Alberta Postsecondary Vocational Instructors** submitted by **Ralph David Walker** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Administration and Leadership.

Dr. M. Andrews, Supervisor

Dr. J. da Costa

Dr. D. Sande

Date: June 9, 2000

This thesis is dedicated with love to

Camille, Matthew, and Chelsea

and

My Father and Mother

David and Kathleen

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Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
1.	INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
	Background	1
	Purpose of the Study	1
	Definition of Terms	2
	Assumptions	2
	Researcher's Beliefs	3
	Delimitations	3
	Limitations	3
	Significance of the Study	4
	Organization of Thesis	5
2.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	6
	Contextual Background	6
	Postsecondary Vocational Education in the Year 2000	7
	Teacher Preparation in Alberta and Canada	8
	Vocational Teacher Preparation in the United States	10
	Vocational Instructors and the New Economy	11
	Vocational Teacher Training and Certification	13
	Professional Development and Lifelong Learning	16
	Summary	17
3.	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD	18
	Research Design	18

Chapter Page

3. (Cont.)

Respondent Group 19

Ethical Considerations 20

Pilot Study 20

Data Collection Techniques 20

Data Analysis Techniques 21

Trustworthiness 23

Summary 24

4. THE FINDINGS 25

Demographics of Postsecondary Vocational Instructors 26

Demographics of Alberta Learning Officials 27

Vocational Instructor Participants – Thumbnail Sketches 28

Vocational Instructor 1 28

Vocational Instructor 2 29

Vocational Instructor 3 29

Vocational Instructor 4 29

Vocational Instructor 5 30

Alberta Learning Participants – Thumbnail Sketches 30

Alberta Learning Official 1 31

Alberta Learning Official 2 31

Alberta Learning Official 3 32

Setting for the Data Collection 32

Chapter Page

4. (Cont.)

Themes Emerging Through the Participant's Voices 33

Theme One – Specialized Occupational Knowledge 34

Theme Two – Personal and Interpersonal Managements Skills 38

Theme Three – Preservice Teacher Training 41

Theme Four – Lifelong Learning 44

Setting a Learning Example 48

Summary 48

5. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND

RECOMMENDATIONS 49

Overview of the Study 49

Purpose of the Study 50

Participants 50

Interview Schedule 51

Research Method 52

Summary and Discussion of Findings 53

Specialized Occupational Knowledge 54

Personal and Interpersonal Management Skills 55

Preservice Teacher Training 57

Lifelong Learning 58

Conclusions 59

Specialized Occupational Skills 60

Chapter | Page

5. (Cont.)

Personal and Interpersonal Management Skills 60

Pre-service Teacher Training 60

Setting a Learning Example 60

Perceptions about Teacher Training 61

Vocation over Teaching 61

Recommendations for Practice 62

Recommendations for Future Study 64

Implications 65

Personal Reflections 65

REFERENCES 67

APPENDIX A: Consent Form for Participants 71

APPENDIX B: Sample Interview Schedule – Instructors 72

APPENDIX C: Sample Interview Schedule – Alberta Learning 73

List of Tables

Table		Page
4-1	Postsecondary Vocational Instructors in the Study	26
4-2	Alberta Learning Officials in the Study	27

CHAPTER ONE

Preparation of Alberta Postsecondary Vocational Instructors

Background

Of recent interest in the field of vocational education is the impact of Government of Alberta policies, which, in combination with the province's educated workforce and natural resources, are known as the *Alberta Advantage* (Goodman, 1996, p.3). Over the past ten years, the Government has led the drive to diversify the economy by stimulating businesses to bring value-added production, high technology and knowledge-intensive services to the Province (p. 4). This shift in economic emphasis from a natural resource-based economy toward a knowledge-based economy has a direct impact on postsecondary vocational instructors, who are faced with the daunting challenge of preparing students for work in this new era.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine, through qualitative inquiry, perceptions that postsecondary vocational instructors and Alberta Learning have toward teacher preparation. Traditionally, postsecondary vocational instructors in this province have been hired directly from business and industry to teach in postsecondary institutions. The Province does not require these instructors to obtain further teacher training and certification once they have commenced teaching (Colleges Act, 1998; Technical Institutes Act, 1996). There is concern in the postsecondary system about the quality of education currently delivered in postsecondary vocational institutions (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1996, p. 2). Therefore, this study was designed to address the

major question: What preparation for teaching do postsecondary vocational instructors and Alberta Learning perceive to be needed to teach in Alberta postsecondary institutions?

Definition of Terms

In order to assist the reader, the following definitions of terms were used throughout this study:

Teacher Preparation. The knowledge and skills required to facilitate learning, including, content development skills, lesson planning skills, teaching methods skills, teaching delivery skills, and interpersonal skills (Carkhuff & Berenson, 1981).

Vocational Instructor. An individual hired directly from business and industry to provide specific technical training and related theory in their field of occupational expertise (American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials [AAVIM], 1989).

Assumptions

Throughout the study I was guided by the following assumptions:

1. All participants interviewed from Alberta Learning were aware of the role of a postsecondary vocational instructor.

2. All participants were able to accurately relate their perceptions of teacher preparation at postsecondary vocational institutions.

3. The preparation of postsecondary vocational instructors at public Alberta institutions was clarified and described through the investigation of the perceptions and beliefs held by five postsecondary vocational instructors and three Alberta Learning officials.

4. The public postsecondary college chosen for the study was governed by the Alberta Colleges Act (1998) and was considered similar to the other colleges governed by the same Act.

5. The public postsecondary institution chosen for the study was governed by the Alberta Technical Institutes Act (1996) and was considered similar to the other institutions governed by the same Act.

Researcher's Beliefs

The rapidly expanding Alberta economy will require employees with high technological and organizational skills (Goodman, 1996, p. 12). I believe that to carry out their responsibilities, vocational instructors will require both advanced technical knowledge of their occupational subject and appropriate teaching pedagogy.

Delimitations

The following delimitations concerning the study were noted:

1. The study was delimited to exploring the perceptions and beliefs about teacher preparation of five Alberta postsecondary vocational instructors and three officials from Alberta Learning.

2. The study was delimited to one vocational college and one technical institution in Alberta.

3. The study was delimited to using interviews to gather the data.

Limitations

The following limitations concerning the study were noted:

1. While it can be argued that the assumptions and beliefs of the study's participants are transferable to other postsecondary vocational institutions, the purposive sampling strategy used increases transferability.

2. The study may have been limited by the willingness of the participants to share their perceptions and attitudes toward teacher preparation with me.

3. Time constraints of participants may have prevented me from gathering the necessary data for clarification of assumptions and beliefs regarding teacher preparation.

Significance of the Study

Beyond training students for the employment sector, postsecondary vocational programs are intended to prepare graduates for future career mobility – not only horizontally, but also vertically. Postsecondary vocational instructors assist in making students capable of meeting the needs of an Alberta workforce competing in the global marketplace. Along with job-specific technical skills, employers also expect graduates to possess sound personal management skills and be capable of working as part of a team (Conference Board of Canada, 1998). The changing workforce conditions should stimulate a need for the ongoing professional development of vocational instructors from both a technological and pedagogical sense.

This study was significant because little has been written about the preparation of Alberta postsecondary vocational instructors. It contributes to literature by illuminating the beliefs held by postsecondary vocational instructors toward teacher preparation in Alberta, and provides a framework for future study in this research area. In addition, the study contributes to practice by comparing the beliefs of Alberta vocational instructors about teacher preparation with the *Employability Skills Profile: The Critical Skills Required of the Canadian Workforce* (1998), a document that has received critical acclaim for clearly identifying the skills required of all workers, *including* Alberta's postsecondary vocational instructors. Therefore, an anticipated outcome of this study was to

create a greater understanding between vocational instructors and Alberta Learning regarding the challenges posed by the "Alberta Advantage."

Organization of Thesis

This study is reported in five chapters. This chapter includes the introduction, a statement of the study problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the significance of the study. Chapter Two is an overview of literature related to current practices of vocational teacher preparation and teacher certification in Alberta and other jurisdictions. Chapter Three describes the design of the study, the sample population, the interview format, the methods used to collect and analyze data, and the pilot study. Chapter Four presents the findings and answers to the research questions. Chapter Five draws conclusions from the findings, and offers recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature provides scholarly observations about current practices of teacher preparation and certification in Alberta and other jurisdictions. It summarizes information gained from recent publications on the changing landscape of vocational education and the American reform movement toward a uniform approach to vocational teacher preparation and certification. Review of the literature in each of these categories contributes to the understanding of the study purpose.

Contextual Background

In the past, most postsecondary vocational instructors in North America were hired for their occupational expertise rather than their teaching credentials (AAVIM, 1989, p. 5). A major factor contributing to this practice is the difficulty in finding persons who have both industrial skills and teaching expertise. Further, when confronted with choosing between an industrial expert and someone with teaching expertise, the occupational expert has typically been selected (Walker, T., Gregson, J.A., & Frantz, N.R., 1996, p. 2). The rationale behind this decision is that while industrial experts may have no teacher training, their solid grasp of industrial practice and familiarity with many aspects of the industry overshadows deficiencies in teacher training (p.2). Unfortunately, the practice of hiring vocational instructors with little teacher training has not worked very well (Lynch, 1996). As summarized in the 1994 National Assessment of Vocational Education Report to the American Congress:

> . . . the findings across many studies conducted over a period of 40 years suggest that extensive occupational experience confers no particular benefits on vocational teaching, although a few years experience has a positive impact. Formal postsecondary education is positively associated with desirable teacher and student outcomes. In short, trade and industry teachers would be better off with more formal education and less occupational experience. (Boesal, Hudson, Deich, & Masten, 1994, p. 75)

The findings of many American studies conducted over the past few decades suggest that while there is no strong relationship between extensive work experience, teaching performance and student achievement, there is a positive relationship between formal teacher preparation and performance in the classroom and student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

Postsecondary Vocational Education in the Year 2000

The quality of vocational education programs is largely determined by the success students have in acquiring the skills, knowledge and values needed by society, and more specifically, the workplace. (Frantz, Friendenberg, Gregson, & Walter, 1996). The workplace of today is being driven by three major developments: (a) the emergence of a competitive global marketplace, (b) the use of new technologies in producing goods and services, and (c) the introduction of different forms of work organization (Carnevale, 1991). To remain competitive in the global marketplace, North American businesses and industries have employed many strategies, including; (a) reducing the number of employees needed for production, (b) moving to niche markets, (c) increasing the use of computer-based technologies in processing information, (d) customizing goods and services to better meet consumer needs, (e) improving the quality of

work, and (f) reducing the time required for production delivery to the customer. These changes to the workplace affect curriculum and teaching practices of postsecondary vocational programs (p. 1).

While the globalization of the North American economy significantly affects the workplace, demographic changes also pose considerable challenges for the educational community. Benjamin Levin and Jon Young (1994) report that 70 percent of Canadian immigrants over the past twenty years have come from Asia, Africa and South America. Postsecondary vocational instructors, particularly those in large cities, may have many students whose first language is not English, and culture, or whose parent's culture, is quite different from the dominant culture in Canada (p. 296). The postsecondary classrooms of vocational instructors may consist of students with diverse backgrounds and students with different learning needs, creating many challenges for vocational instructors without specialized teacher preparation.

In the discussion that follows, the context of the forces shaping the workforce and vocational education will be contrasted with the levels of teacher preparation required of postsecondary vocational instructors in Alberta, Canada, and the United States.

Teacher Preparation in Alberta and Canada

The number of Alberta postsecondary vocational instructors is significantly less than K-12 teachers, which may be why the preparation levels of postsecondary vocational instructors seem to go unnoticed. For the K-12 teaching majority, Alberta demands a recognized degree and teaching

certification before commencement of employment (School Act, 1993). Teachers of technical and vocational subjects in the Alberta K-12 system are required to possess the same credentials. Levin and Young (1994) note that across Canada, most teachers have at least one university degree, and as a group, are among the most educated persons in the nation. Alberta postsecondary vocational instructors may not be a component of the Levin and Young statistics; of 264 vocational instructors at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), only 19% hold a Bachelor of Education degree, and only a few instructors possess a Master of Education designation (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, 1997). The National Occupational Classification for postsecondary vocational instructors reflects the NAIT situation, reporting that while college instructors must have a college diploma or bachelor's degree, vocational instructors require only trade certification (Human Resources Development Canada, 2000).

Currently, few provinces in Canada require postsecondary vocational instructors to complete formal teacher training. In Alberta, legislation governing public postsecondary technical institutions and vocational institutions does not refer to teacher preparation levels (Colleges Act, 1998; Technical Institutes Act, 1996). Only two Canadian provinces expect postsecondary vocational instructors to complete some form of teacher education as a condition of employment. British Columbia requires postsecondary vocational instructors to complete a 6-course *Provincial Instructor Diploma Program* within a year of commencement (Provincial Instructor Diploma Program, 1997; B.C. College of

Teachers, 1997). Manitoba requires that postsecondary vocational instructors complete a twelve-course teacher training program before commencing employment (Red River College, 1988). In both these provinces, a provisional teaching certificate is granted upon successful completion of course work, allowing recipients to teach specific vocational courses in provincial high schools and community colleges.

Vocational Teacher Preparation in the United States

The levels of teacher preparation expected of postsecondary vocational instructors in American States does not differ substantially from those of Canadian provinces (Chinien, 1995). At least 40 states allow districts to hire teachers without a valid teaching certificate (Daugherty, 1997). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) observed, "Most states pay more attention to the qualifications of veterinarians treating America's cats and dogs than those of the people educating the nation's children and youth." Daugherty (1997) observes that, "Teacher preparation. . . in the United States continues to be distressingly ad hoc," which contributes to ". . . the continual hiring of large numbers of people as 'teachers' who are unprepared for their jobs" (p. 48). On a positive note, a reform movement is gripping American vocational education (p. 49).

Some American states have mandatory teacher education programs for postsecondary vocational instructors that are more comprehensive than those found in British Columbia and Manitoba. The philosophy of most vocational teacher programs in the United States is one of ongoing professional

development leading to progressive levels of teacher certification. For example, Ohio has an extensive vocational teacher training program designed to "ensure that all nondegreed teachers achieve professional competence and obtain state certification" (AAVIM, p. 67). The Ohio program is offered in four progressive stages, and strives to pair practical classroom experience with professional teacher education (p.46). Participation in the program is a condition of employment for all new teachers, and the program must be successfully completed within three years (p. 46). The teacher is encouraged to continue professional development through completing additional college-level course work in education and his/her related occupational area (p. 69).

Advancing technology, global competition and the intense drive for productivity in the United States are raising the stakes for postsecondary vocational education increasingly higher. Lynch (1996) believes that America's schools are challenged to give vocational students an education that prepares them for high-skill, high-wage jobs, and that quality teaching and teacher education is inextricably linked to the challenge. Research in the United States has revealed that only 33% of postsecondary trade teachers begin teaching with a baccalaureate degree, and only about 50% remain teaching five years later, further questioning the teaching preparedness of postsecondary vocational instructors (p. 2).

Vocational Instructors and the New Economy

What should be taken into account when considering teacher preparation of postsecondary vocational instructors for the new economy? The University

Council for Vocational Education (UCVE) has prepared a monograph (Hartley & Wenting, 1996) describing the policies and practice for the preparation of vocational teachers. It clarifies existing practices in teacher preparation in the context of new teacher education reform and practice. The UCVE suggests that a vital component in the repertoire of a well-qualified vocational instructor must be the ability to link learning with workplaces, focusing not only on occupational disciplines, but also on contextual relationships between subject matter and integrated work-based contexts meaningful to the student at the time of learning. Mastery of basic occupational knowledge and skills should be used with instructional strategies that develop problem-solving and high order thinking skills within students.

Canadian employers are now calling for postsecondary vocational graduates to possess a complete set of *employability skills*. Literature about employability skills focuses on a central theme; employees of the new economy must have a combination of educational, personal and interpersonal management skills in order to be successful (Centko, 1998). The Corporate Council on Education, a committee sponsored by the Conference Board of Canada, is a champion of employability skills. Consisting of more than fifty of the nation's largest employers, the Council publishes a document entitled *Employability Skills Profile – What Are Employers Looking For?* (Conference Board of Canada, 1998) The underlying theme of this document is that "academic, personal management, and teamwork skills ... form the foundation of a high-quality Canadian workforce both today and tomorrow" (p. 1).

Employability skills are grouped into three interlocking categories: personal management skills, teamwork skills, and academic skills. Personal management skills are the combination of skills, attitudes, and behaviours required to get, keep and progress on a job (p. 2). Teamwork skills are those needed to work with others on a job (p. 2). Academic skills provide the foundation to get, keep and progress on a job (p 2). The Council's profile is an excellent framework from which to understand the critical skills required of the entire Canadian workforce, which *includes* postsecondary vocational instructors.

Vocational Teacher Training and Certification

In many North American locales, short preservice workshops serve as the only teacher preparation required of postsecondary vocational instructors (AAVIM, 1989, p.5). These workshops often amount to little more than a crash course in survival teaching skills, leaving most pedagogy to be learned on the job (p. 5). Consequently, vocational instructors frequently teach the way they were taught, using a teacher-centered approach, and are concerned primarily with delivery of technical skills (Volk, 1993). Bruer (1993) determined that short-term teacher preparation programs do not significantly affect a teacher's growth. Numerous studies suggest that vocational instructors need to be able to teach heuristic strategies, metacognitive skills, and personal and social skills along with occupational skills to adequately prepare students for the post-industrial era (Bradley, 1983; Frantz, 1994; Vos, 1989). The Adult Development Branch of Alberta Learning has indicated that adult educators need to adjust to the ever-

changing global economy (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1996).

Recently, policymakers have turned their attention to implementing educational standards as a method to improve vocational teaching and learning (Barton, 1996; Jennings, 1995; Tucker, 1996). Eisner (1995) reports:

> Standards are being formulated for the certification of teachers, for the content of curricula, and for outcomes of teaching. Virtually every subject-matter field in education has formulated or is in the process of formulating or revising national standards that describe what students should know and be able to do. (p. 759)

Lynch reviewed 17 American studies on labour market performance of students and concluded that, "Better teachers produce better employees: that is, better-educated teachers produce labour market results for their students..." (1996, p.2). His review concludes by recommending that a bachelor's degree and preparation in teaching methods be recognized as the minimum standard for all new vocational teachers in the United States (p.66). Standards of teacher preparation for vocational instructors would establish minimum levels of academic, technical and professional education competence. Vocational instructors need to have attained, at the very least, higher levels of education themselves if they are to inspire and motivate their students to pursue lifelong education (Frantz, Friendenberg, Gregson, & Walter, 1996).

The National Association of Industrial and Technical Teacher Educators (NAITTE) has provided leadership towards the establishment of standards for vocational instructors in the United States that increase the threshold for entry into vocational teaching. These standards require beginning vocational

instructors to; (a) hold an associate degree from an accredited postsecondary institution, (b) demonstrate their vocational competency by completing a nationally approved competency exam, and (c) have work-related experiences (NAITTE, 1996). The standards provide for a probationary period during which the teacher must earn an education degree (p. 2). Frantz, et al, comment that, "These standards reflect the practical need to recruit technically competent individuals with some work experience, but also recognizes a well-educated teacher as absolutely necessary to meet the current and future demands of vocational education" (Frantz, Friendenberg, Gregson, & Walter, 1996).

The standards addressed by NAITTE are in two forms. The first form addresses the process, or delivery of vocational teacher education, as a lifelong series of professional development activities. The three levels of proficiency are: (a) associate teacher: a two-year associate degree, (b) qualified teacher: a four-year bachelor's degree, and, (c) master teacher: possession of a masters degree with five years of successful experience. The second type of standard deals with instruction, with six broad areas that address curricular content and instructional aspects of vocational teaching. These areas encompass instruction, curriculum, special populations of students, laboratory organization and management, linkages with stakeholder groups, and the ability to communicate professionalism (NAITTE, 1996). Together, the NAITTE standards describe the core of knowledge believed to be essential for vocational instructors. Simply stated, the standards promise teaching excellence for all students through the efforts of better teachers (Galluzzo, 1996). These standards also serve as a benchmark

from which existing teacher preparation programs can be compared (Moss Jr., 1996).

Professional Development and Lifelong Learning

A position paper published by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) concludes, "Teachers have the responsibility to review periodically their own effectiveness and to seek improvements as part of a continuing process of their professional development" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1991). Postsecondary vocational instructors are not members of the ATA, and have no published opinions regarding professional development. Vocational instructors are largely left on their own regarding professional development and lifelong learning. This may contribute to the low numbers who hold Bachelor of Education credentials at NAIT, the province's largest technical institution. In a recent study at NAIT, Carroll (1997) recommended that professional development planners at NAIT establish a mindset of lifelong learning among instructors (p. 105). An equally important reason vocational instructors should embrace professional development is the rapidly changing workforce, due in part to the "Alberta Advantage" (Goodman, p.4). University of Waterloo professor Ronald E. Hansen (1993) concludes this review of the literature with his suggestion that, ". . . Technology and the way we transmit knowledge about it in schools, is changing . . . substantive analysis of past practices in technological teacher education are overdue" (p. 1).

Summary

In summary, most postsecondary vocational instructors in North America were hired for their occupational expertise rather than their teacher preparation credentials. Few jurisdictions in Canada or the United States have mandatory teacher preparation or certification, although reforms concerning this subject are emerging. While technical and vocational teachers in the K-12 system require mandatory teacher preparation leading to permanent certification, Alberta's postsecondary vocational instructors have no such requirement. Postsecondary vocational instructors, once hired, are not required to pursue teacher preparation as a condition of employment. As vocational education moves into the 21st century, the premise is germinated that the role of the postsecondary vocational instructor will change significantly. In order for Canada to be a player in the highly competitive global market, our nation's workforce must possess the skills required to flourish in high-performance work organizations (Centko, 1998, p.1). Along with job-specific technical and academic skills, our postsecondary vocational programs must produce graduates with personal and interpersonal management skills and be capable of working as part of a team (Conference Board of Canada, 1998). The absence of literature concerning the teacher preparation of Alberta's postsecondary vocational educators paves the way for the expansion of inquiry.

CHAPTER THREE
Research Design and Method

The research procedures used in the study are presented in this chapter. The following sections included in the chapter are, (a) research design, (b) sample and population, (c) ethical concerns, (d) pilot study, (e) data collection, (f) data analysis, (g) trustworthiness, and (h) summary.

Research Design

A qualitative interview research design was chosen for the study. Semi-structured interviews were used to address the research questions, primarily because I was seeking a comprehensive understanding of the assumptions and beliefs of the participants. Participants were chosen from two Alberta postsecondary institutions and from Alberta Learning. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five postsecondary vocational instructors and three officials from Alberta Learning who were knowledgeable about postsecondary vocational instruction. A semi-structured interview format results in the collection of data containing rich descriptions to illustrate and interpret meaning and beliefs, and "...has the advantage of providing reasonably standard data across respondents, but of greater depth that can be obtained from a structured interview" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 310). The semi-structured approach also permitted the conversation to be guided by participants' responses. The interview questions for both postsecondary vocational instructors and officials from Alberta Learning are provided in Appendix B and C.

Respondent Group

This study was conducted with participants from a college, a technical institution, and at Alberta Learning. The vocational college will hereafter be called Prairie Vocational College (PVC), and the technical institution as Wildrose Technical Institute (WTI). Alberta Learning did not receive a pseudonym.

Purposeful sampling was used as the sampling strategy for this study. The respondent group consisted of five postsecondary vocational instructors and three officials from Alberta Learning knowledgeable about postsecondary vocational instruction. One further vocational instructor was originally scheduled for an interview, but complications prevented the interview from occurring. I elicited expert nomination of participants through consultation with appropriate senior officials at the respective institutions and at Alberta Learning. The eight participants were selected based on their availability, their willingness to participate, and their knowledge and experiences with vocational instruction and teacher preparation. In addition, selection of vocational instructors was according to; (a) long-term instructional experience more than ten years and (b) short-term instructional experience of less than five years. Vocational instructors with and without extensive teacher preparation were selected. The two postsecondary facilities provided contextual differences within which vocational instructors work, and thus the selection considered the learning environment and subject area taught. Selection of participants from Alberta Learning included; (a) those with long-term experience greater than ten years and (b) those with short-

term experience of less than five years. A proportionate number of Alberta Learning officials with and without postsecondary credentials were interviewed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from a University of Alberta Ethics Review Committee on the proposed research study. I assured confidentiality of the institutions, the vocational instructors, and officials from Alberta Learning. A copy of the consent form appears in Appendix A. Pseudonyms for the institutions and the participants were used throughout the study and descriptive information was kept to a minimum to prevent recognition by readers.

Pilot Study

The interview schedule was piloted in March 1999 to establish if the questions were clearly constructed and to allow me to develop ease with the interview process. The participant was a postsecondary vocational instructor at a large Alberta public institution. The pilot study process was a beneficial preparation tool as a precursor to the actual research. This pilot process gave me the opportunity to further develop interviewer skills and reframe the interview questions and observation techniques.

Data Collection Techniques

This study used data collection techniques to gain insight into factors that influence assumptions and beliefs about teacher preparation held by postsecondary vocational instructors and Alberta Learning, and to construct an explanatory model about teacher preparation grounded in these assumptions and beliefs. The data were collected through independent interviews. The

interview schedules for both postsecondary vocational instructors and officials from Alberta Learning are provided in Appendix B and C. All interviews were conducted by me during the months of November and December 1999. All interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed into text by me. After selection of the participants, one-hour interview appointments were scheduled. All participants were assured of their anonymity and signed a consent form. Although participants were informed that their transcripts would be made available for their perusal, all declined.

During the interviews, I took cryptic notes and recorded observations and thoughts that occurred as the interview progressed. Promptly after each interview session my notes were expanded to take into consideration three questions: What was learned from the person interviewed? What areas of the interview format needed to be improved? How can the content of the next interview be expanded? Summaries of what was learned during the interviews were recorded in my reflective notes.

Data Analysis Techniques

A favoured method of establishing reliable results is through constant comparative analysis, which provides a way to analyze written material in a reliable fashion (Silverman, 1993). This method allowed me to "establish a set of categories and then count the number of instances that fall into each category" (p. 9). I obtained category saturation when the words, actions, or events of the data became repetitive.

Audiotapes were transcribed and reflective notes compiled for analysis. Transcripts were read and coded by highlighting key words. Emerging themes were determined based on the highlighted terms. Coded transcripts were then placed into *The Ethnograph* (1998) software, a computer software program designed to aid researchers in coded information retrieval. The goal of the analysis was to identify trends and patterns in perceptions.

Initial data analysis was primarily determined inductively. Consistent with Abrahamson (1983, p 286), I began the inductive approach by becoming immersed in the audiotaped interviews and transcripts in order to identify the themes that seemed meaningful to the participants. The review of the literature stimulated the identification of themes, thus contributing deductively.

As each interview session was transcribed, a duplicate copy of the transcript was created. The original transcript remained intact through the data analysis process, allowing me to refer to the original text. Data were then organized by the themes that emerged, which were assigned a code. The themes were established through units of information consisting of phrases, sentences, and segments of text.

These segments of text were sorted using *The Ethnograph* software based on codes assigned. The coded segments were retrieved and analyzed according to themes. The basis for theme development was derived from literature about vocational teacher preparation and from the employability skills noted by the Conference Board of Canada (1998). Critical to all members of the Canadian workforce, the employability skill sets include: (a) academic skills;

those skills which provide the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job and achieve the best results; (b) personal management skills: the combination of skills, attitudes and behaviours required to get, keep and progress in a job and to achieve the best results, and (c) teamwork skills: the skills needed to work with others on the job and to achieve the best results. Other themes were included as they emerged in the transcripts and quotes were taken from the transcripts to illustrate each theme.

Trustworthiness

Rather than refer to quantitative concepts of reliability and validity of research data and findings, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that qualitative research should focus on the trustworthiness and confirmability of the data. The data and findings must be credible and consistent, and the findings must be grounded in the data.

The predominant data sources in this study were the perceptions about teacher preparation held by five postsecondary vocational instructors and three officials from Alberta Learning knowledgeable about vocational instruction. Data collected from the participants and the themes that emerged from their responses provided rich descriptions about the teacher preparation of postsecondary vocational instructors that enhances the transferability of findings to similar situations.

The very nature of the research question may have promoted hypothesis guessing, particularly among the participants from the postsecondary institutions. Following an interview guide lessened this threat. Issues of trustworthiness of

the research data were also improved by seeking clarification and elaboration of responses throughout the interview session, summarizing points as they were made for confirmation, and follow-up. An audit trail was established by accurately documenting the information obtained and the procedures followed during each phase of the study.

Summary

In this chapter, research design, sample and population, ethical concerns, the pilot study, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness were described. The study involved a qualitative approach, using an interview process to gather data. Eight respondents were interviewed in sessions lasting approximately 45 minutes. Each session was recorded with audiocassette tapes. Additional information was captured in my reflective notes. Tapes of the sessions were transcribed and tapes assigned a code name. The corresponding reflective comments were also assigned code names.

Contents of the transcripts were examined for themes that emerged. These themes were assigned a code name and transcripts were placed into *The Ethnograph* software. Findings regarding the examination of each theme are reported in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine perceptions about teacher preparation held by postsecondary vocational instructors and knowledgeable officials from Alberta Learning. Five interviews with postsecondary vocational instructors and three interviews with Alberta Learning officials were conducted during the months of November and December 1999. The findings are reported according to the contextual information and emergent themes gathered from analysis of the interview sessions. The description of context is organized according to demographic information of the participants from the two postsecondary institutions and Alberta Learning, and is followed by thumbnail sketches of each individual. Specialized occupational knowledge, personal and interpersonal management skills, preservice teacher training, and lifelong learning make up the emergent themes. One subtheme emerged inductively from the data linked to the lifelong learning theme.

The eight participants were selected purposely through expert nomination based on their availability, their knowledge and experiences about postsecondary vocational instruction and teacher preparation, and their willingness to participate. In order to study the possible differences and similarities in divergent settings, the vocational instructors were from two postsecondary institutions representing different regions and populations of the province. In addition, vocational instructors were chosen according to two criteria: (a) length of time employed as a postsecondary vocational instructor, and (b) the amount of formal teacher preparation held by the participant. The two criteria for Alberta Learning

officials, all of whom were from Edmonton, was length of service with the Branch and the amount of formal teacher preparation held by the participant. While the interview sessions were designed to last around 45 minutes, none were less than 30 minutes or exceeded an hour in length.

Demographics of Postsecondary Vocational Instructors

Prior to interviewing the five participants of this study, pseudonyms were assigned to the vocational instructors and their respective postsecondary institutions. This ensured anonymity and provided an easy method of tracking responses. Table 4.1 provides basic demographic information of the postsecondary vocational instructors who participated in the study.

Table 4-1
Postsecondary Vocational Instructors in the Study

Participants	Position	Institution	Years of Experience	Amount of Teacher Preparation
Eve	Vocational Instructor	Prairie Vocational College	Less than 1 year	3 week course
Green	Program Coordinator/ Vocational Instructor	Prairie Vocational College	5 years	Bachelor of Education
Newfie	Vocational Instructor	Prairie Vocational College	12 years	4 week course
Steve	Vocational Instructor	Wildrose Technical Institute	8 years	2 week course
Vas	Program Coordinator/ Vocational Instructor	Wildrose Technical Institute	25 years	3 week course

Demographic information for the postsecondary vocational instructors was obtained from the information provided by participants during the opening stages of the interview, where professional and academic backgrounds were discussed.

As indicated in Table 4.1, the participants had a range of teaching experiences from one to 25 years. Two of the participants were program leaders. While one participant held a Bachelor of Education degree, the formal teacher preparation of the remaining participants was mostly limited to short preservice teacher training programs. All of the participants had extensive, specialized vocational knowledge in their field of occupational expertise. Four of the five participants were male, with ages ranging from middle thirties to early fifties.

Demographics of Alberta Learning Officials

Prior to interviewing the three Alberta Learning participants, pseudonyms were assigned in order to ensure their anonymity and the easy tracking of responses. Table 4.2 details the Alberta Learning officials who participated in the study.

Table 4-2
Alberta Learning Officials in the Study

Participants	Position	Years of Experience as a Postsecondary Vocational Instructor	Years of Experience Working with Vocational Instructors	Amount of Teacher Preparation
Eli	Manager	2 years	5 years	Bachelor of Education
Thor	Director	8 years	30 years	Bachelor of Education
Kirk	Program Development Officer	none	10 years	none

Demographic information for the participants from Alberta Learning was obtained from the information provided during the opening stages of the

interview, where professional and academic backgrounds were discussed. As shown in Table 4.2, the participants were a diverse group with varied job descriptions and responsibilities. All of the participants are in continuous contact with postsecondary vocational instructors. Two of the participants have themselves been postsecondary vocational instructors. Both of these individuals hold undergraduate degrees and have permanent Alberta Teaching certificates. All of the Alberta Learning participants have considerable specialized occupational knowledge. The participants were all male, with ages ranging from middle thirties to early sixties.

Vocational Instructor Participants - Thumbnail Sketches

The following are thumbnail sketches of the five vocational instructor participants.

Vocational Instructor 1. Eve teaches pre-apprentice carpentry at Prairie Vocational College. Eve is new to teaching, having been at the college for less than one year. Eve holds journeyman certificates in carpentry and cabinetmaking, along with a diploma in architectural and construction engineering. Eve believes the major reason she was hired as an instructor was to be a role model for her students, who are all females. When asked if she had completed any formal teacher preparation, Eve spoke positively of a three-week preservice teacher training program she had completed prior to commencing teaching at the college, commenting that preservice, ". . . Made me aware of what I was getting into." While appearing nervous at the beginning of the interview, Eve was candid and open throughout.

Vocational Instructor 2. "It gave me a whole lot better understanding of my students and what they're going through," remarked Green, when asked of the benefits of teacher preparation. Green is the coordinator of occupational programs at Prairie Vocational College, performing a dual role as leader and vocational instructor. He has been with the college for less than five years. Green holds degrees in theology and education, and has specialized occupational experience spanning two decades. A self-professed lifelong learner, Green offered a myriad of perspectives about vocational instruction at Prairie Vocational College.

Vocational Instructor 3. Although nervous at the beginning, Newfie slowly relaxed as the interview questions turned to vocational instruction and teacher preparation, subjects that appeared to be of great personal interest to him. While new to Prairie Vocational College, Newfie has twelve years of instructional experience, primarily in northern Canada with First Nations people. A journeyman carpenter, Newfie has many years of specialized occupational experience. He has also completed two short preservice teacher training programs at different postsecondary institutions. Preservice teacher training was of great importance to Newfie, as he claimed these courses gave him the self-confidence to instruct, "I used to have problems in front of people and after I took the programs I seemed to have no problems anymore."

Vocational Instructor 4. Steve is originally from Ontario, where he completed his formal occupational training before moving out west. He is a dedicated tradesperson, speaking passionately about his affiliations with

professional associations and international teaching experience. A journeyman cook and certified chef, Steve has been employed by Wildrose Technical Institute since 1991. He is currently in a dual role that combines instruction with some light supervisory duties. Steve completed a two-week preservice program when he started at Wildrose, and has taken in-service courses. Steve was impressed by what he learned at preservice, commenting that the pedagogical knowledge gained has been invaluable throughout his instructional career. Steve feels he was hired by Wildrose because of his specialized culinary knowledge and his affiliations with various external constituents.

Vocational Instructor 5. Vas has over 25 years of instructional experience at Wildrose Technical Institute. He holds two separate engineering qualifications totaling seven years of postsecondary education. The extent of his formal teacher training has been a three-week preservice course offered by Wildrose at the time he was hired. Vas found the preservice program, "Absolutely beneficial," saying that preservice provided the teaching skills required to enter the classroom with a degree of confidence. Currently performing a role that combines instruction with some supervisory duties, Vas is involved in a technical program leading to journeyman certification. He commented that the student body largely consists of recent immigrants to Canada, and their lack of competency in the English language creates unique instructional challenges.

Alberta Learning Participants - Thumbnail Sketches

The following are thumbnail sketches of the three participants:

Alberta Learning Official 1. With a long list of academic and occupational achievements, Eli provided his views from the perspective of a manager in regular contact with postsecondary vocational instructors. A certified Alberta tradesperson, Eli also holds a Bachelor of Education degree that included training in teaching practicums in an Alberta postsecondary institution. In addition, Eli has taught various subjects at both secondary and postsecondary levels. Eli spoke with pride about the benefits of vocational training in Alberta. While speaking affirmatively about teacher training, Eli felt that it could be improved, ". . . If it followed more of an apprenticeship model rather than a front-end kind of model."

Alberta Learning Official 2. Thor has been involved with vocational instruction for much of his working career. While his pedagogical experiences range from K-12 through to postsecondary, Thor has spent a large amount of time as an educational administrator throughout the Alberta postsecondary school system. Thor was himself a vocational instructor at two Alberta institutions for eight years. He holds a Master's degree in engineering and has an after-degree that led to formal teacher certification. Thor has also completed a one-month preservice teacher training course at a postsecondary institution. In his present capacity with Alberta Learning, Thor is in continuous contact with vocational educators in the province. Thor offered a variety of perspectives about vocational instruction and teacher education in Alberta. He spoke with considerable pride about the enviable position Alberta has established as trainers of almost one-quarter of Canada's apprentices. While not a proponent of

legislated vocational teacher preparation, Thor believed, "There should be clear expectations of instructional development."

Alberta Learning Official 3. As a Program Development Officer, Kirk has been in direct contact with vocational instructors for more than ten years. Kirk holds journeyman certification in two of the trades he oversees, and has completed an Electronics Technician diploma from an Alberta postsecondary institution. While his job responsibilities include curriculum development and the development of trade examinations, Kirk has never taught or completed any teacher training. Kirk is proud of his occupational roots, and spoke candidly of the challenges facing the trades he represents. When asked about professional development, Kirk responded that keeping abreast of technical skills was of critical importance for postsecondary vocational instructors, ". . . They've got to keep upgrading themselves continuously if they want to do their job to the best of their abilities."

Setting for the Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to provide participants a forum in which to share their views, beliefs, and experiences. Observation data gathered during interviews were recorded as reflective notes. The eight participants gave permission to have their interviews audiotaped. They were assured their identities would be kept confidential. The interview location was primarily at the participant's work site, usually in a meeting room adjacent to their office.

The interviews included throwaway questions that were used to stimulate conversation about teacher preparation. Depending on the answers, I employed

various probes to determine further views on teacher preparation. Generally, as the participants responded to the questions and provided examples to illustrate different points about teacher preparation, they divulged information about themselves, both personally and professionally. Once the interview ended and the tape recorder was shut off, some participants added candid comments about teacher preparation and certification, which are captured in the reflective notes.

Themes Emerging Through the Participant's Voices

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of the eight interviews. The first theme, **specialized occupational knowledge**, involved the personal belief system that specialized occupational knowledge provided the basic foundation from which postsecondary vocational instructors became teachers. Their vision was that specific occupational knowledge was the most important part of the preparation to become a vocational instructor. This self-view gave participants the confidence to enter the classroom. The second theme, **personal and interpersonal management skills**, emerged from the participant's strong beliefs that specific personal and interpersonal management skills are a necessary component of vocational teacher preparation. This belief is that effective communication and positive attitudes and behaviours greatly improve the chances of being an effective instructor. The next theme, **preservice teacher training**, illustrates how vocational instructors rely on short, preservice programs to give them the teaching skills required to make the transition from tradesperson to instructor. They relied on preservice training to prepare them for the classroom. The fourth theme related to **lifelong learning**. The participants in

the study believed ongoing professional development in both occupational and teaching subject areas was a desired attribute of a postsecondary vocational instructor. One subtheme, **setting a learning example**, emerged inductively from the lifelong learning theme.

These salient themes are illustrated from narratives of the interview sessions. The themes are explored and reported using each participant's voice to express their unique beliefs and views. They are explored and reported without comment from the author. All of the participants showed dedication to their current jobs and spoke positively of teaching and of their specific vocations.

Theme One – Specialized Occupational Knowledge

The vocational instructors were asked during the interview to talk about why they believed they were hired as an instructor and whether their trade experience alone sufficiently prepared them to teach at a postsecondary level.

Eve, a vocational instructor at Prairie Community College, believed one of the major reasons she was hired was because she had the appropriate specialized occupational knowledge. She comments that, "You have to be ticketed to instruct trade courses." While she does not believe that her trade experience alone prepared her to teach at a postsecondary level, she refers to the teaching part of being a tradesperson; "You teach one-on-one when you're working...as a journeyman."

Green, a program coordinator and instructor at Prairie Community College, instructs in a vocational area without recognized trade qualifications. He has 22 years of industry experience and two undergraduate degrees. Green

believes that he was hired by the College because of his previous experience as a consultant and trainer in his chosen occupational field. Green does not think his trade experience sufficiently prepared him to teach, adding that teaching is a, ". . . Whole different world."

When asked why he was hired at Prairie Community College, Newfie explained how his extensive occupational background and previous teaching experience got him the job. When asked to elaborate, Newfie commented about having specialized expertise critical to the curriculum that particularly interested Prairie Community College. Newfie feels that previous trade experience is a definite asset for vocational instructors.

Steve, a vocational instructor at Wildrose Technical Institute, felt that he was hired both for his extensive occupational knowledge and because of his affiliation with a key professional organization. Steve felt his unique industry experiences prior to becoming an instructor sufficiently prepared him for teaching; "I was a very strong supporter of apprenticeship where I worked . . . and I think that was an advantage, plus the fact that we taught at the restaurant I was at. We took a lot of time with them and got them on the right path."

Highly specialized technical skills are the reason Vas thinks he was hired to instruct at Wildrose Technical Institute; ". . . There was a real need and growth in the field, and I was in a really specialized area." He believes that his industry background sufficiently prepared him for instruction, making the observation that after a number years in the business, ". . . Eventually I was able, had developed enough skills, to really be able to enlighten people working in the field."

The Alberta Learning officials were also asked, during the time of the interview, to comment on the most important qualities of a postsecondary vocational instructor and whether their trade experience alone sufficiently prepares a person to teach at a postsecondary level.

Eli, a department manager from Alberta Learning directly involved with vocational training, feels that industry experience is a critical prerequisite to becoming a postsecondary vocational instructor; "You have to have been out there in industry a lot so that you can gain the respect of the people you are trying to teach." While Eli claimed that trade experience alone is not sufficient preparation to become a vocational instructor, he mentioned that with certain trades people can make the transformation to instruction without additional teaching training; "I guess what I am saying is that you don't necessarily have to have teacher education through a formal means or have a formal credential in order to possess those skills."

Thor holds a highly responsible position at Alberta Learning, and has an extensive background in vocational instruction. He believes that the most important quality of a vocational instructor is a solid occupational background; ". . . The instructor who can involve students in doing activities which come natural to trades instructors . . . that can involve students in doing things and learning by reinforcement, it strengthens the vocational training." Thor also feels that while people with an aptitude for teaching are able to instruct at a postsecondary level without pedagogical training, even gifted teachers benefit from additional teacher education.

Involved with trades training on a daily basis, Kirk believes that occupational skills are the single most important component of teacher preparation; "You've got to have the expertise. It doesn't matter where; you need the trade background in order to teach. There are no two ways about it." Kirk also feels that a person could enter teaching on the strength of their occupational credentials. He commented that the teaching skills gained in industry while working with apprentices should be directly applicable to instruction in a postsecondary institution; "A journeyman may teach his apprentice more hand skills, and even technical skills, on the job site without ever having any type of teaching experience whatsoever."

There is no written documentation from either of the postsecondary institutions involved in the study specifying preparation standards of vocational instructors. In Alberta, legislation governing public technical institutions does not refer to teacher preparation other than to stipulate that recognized trades must be taught by a certified journeyman in that trade.

All of the participants mentioned that specialized occupational knowledge serves as the basis from which the skills of teaching are built. Most of the participants also mentioned that postsecondary vocational instructors require pedagogical skills if they wish to be successful teachers. Thor captures this thought, stressing that, "I do think that instructors at a postsecondary level can benefit from teacher training."

Theme Two – Personal and Interpersonal Management Skills

The participants from the institutions were asked to comment on the skills and expertise believed to be required of a postsecondary vocational instructor. A number of questions on the interview schedule evoked responses about the personal and interpersonal management skills required of a vocational instructor. In particular, the ability to communicate, demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours, and show responsibility and adaptability anchored this theme.

New to instruction, Eve mentioned that time management was an important interpersonal management skill; "My biggest challenge is time. Trying to fit it all in one day, or in a period of time." Eve later mentioned that she felt hampered by her inability to manage time, and would welcome the opportunity to improve on this skill.

Green spoke at length about what he coined as the *attitude for training*. While he spoke of a number of desirable personal characteristics of postsecondary vocational instructors, he spoke frequently of personality; "The comfort level of the students and what they get from an instructor is based upon experience, is based upon teaching skills, and is based upon personality. And it all has to fit in the right way." Green also believes that vocational instructors must be genuinely interested in their students, remarking that, "The part of who I am is caring about the students, and caring about their learning, and trying to get that across to the students."

When he first began teaching, Newfie felt that his shyness impeded his ability to communicate with students. Newfie has since taken public-speaking

courses he believes have improved his communication skills. Speaking at length about the personal and interpersonal management skills required of vocational instructors, Newfie believes that, "You can know your trade inside out, but if you can't communicate with your students or your fellow co-workers and work as a team, it's going to make teaching very difficult." Newfie was also concerned about his responsibilities as a vocational instructor to maintain a safe working environment for his students, commenting, "Safety has become a big aspect."

Steve also expressed strong beliefs about the personal and interpersonal management skills required of vocational instructors. He stressed the need for communication and organizational skills, explaining that a vocational instructor is, ". . . Somebody who first of all is able to converse with people, who has a certain amount of organizational skills and has good people skills." Sound personal values are also important to Steve. He remarks, "I think you have to follow a set of values when you are teaching. And I think if you do the best you can do, you can look back and feel you really accomplished something."

Positive attitudes and behaviours toward teaching are important to Vas. A good work ethic is critical, as he illustrates by the lengths he goes to instruct his students; "I'll try, even if it's a matter of having to go up and show them the logarithm keys on the calculator. You know I'm prepared to do that. I'm prepared to try to help the students get it right from the beginning." Vas also stresses the importance of working with others, explaining, "They have to be able to work with people. They must be able to impart the information that they know." Of particular importance to Vas are the attitudes and behaviours that govern the role of teacher. He observes that, "I think the key is being absolutely passionate with your students. You have to love the job, be dedicated to it, never look at the

time, you must give unlimited attention to the students, and then the rewards come in for the job."

The Alberta Learning officials were also asked, during the time of the interview, to comment on the skills and expertise believed to be required of postsecondary vocational instructors. A number of questions on the interview schedule evoked responses about personal and interpersonal management skills.

Thor explained that a fundamental attribute required of a vocational instructor is having the right attitude about teaching; "One of the attributes that a successful instructor needs is attitude. If you're a jerk, it doesn't matter how many instructional skills you have or how well you know your trade, you're dealing with human beings and they don't like being with jerks. So you have to be a reasonable human being first, you have to care about the students, and you have to care about their learning. And they have to know that you care about their learning."

"What we're really trying to do is develop some problem-solving skills in the learner," remarked Eli. "Building a connection so that when something happens in a practical situation you can go back and look at it." In addition to good communication skills, Eli identified another positive trait of vocational instructors, remarking, "I think one of the most critical qualities is being able to empathize."

Kirk emphasized communication as one of the most important qualities of being a vocational instructor. "It's to be able to communicate to the students. It's important to have the knowledge, but if you don't have the expertise or the knack of actually being able to bring it out, the students won't understand it." Pride in your vocation was another trait believed important by Kirk; ". . . Their values and

beliefs will automatically relate to how they teach. If he's not proud . . . he's not going to be able to bring it across to the students . . . If I don't like my job, how can I turn around and be very positive and teach you how to do it?" Kirk also commented that vocational instructors should be responsible for managing the shop environment in a safe and effective manner.

The personal and interpersonal management skills believed to be important by vocational instructors closely correlate with those described by Alberta Learning officials. The personal and interpersonal management skills described by the participants enhance the suitability of a vocational instructor. The participants agreed that personal and interpersonal management skills served as a fundamental component of teacher preparation. Steve summarizes the growing importance of personal and interpersonal management skills when probed to prioritize between them and technical skills; "I think nowadays it's a case where I think they have almost the same weight. And I really believe that."

Theme Three – Preservice Teacher Training

When the participants in the study were asked to comment on the formal teacher training they had completed, the conversation inevitably turned to preservice teacher training. Each of the vocational instructors in the study felt that preservice teacher training was extremely beneficial. They felt that the teaching skills received in preservice training prepared them for the classroom in a *just-in-time* fashion. In most cases, preservice training was the only formal teacher preparation completed by the participants. This preservice training is usually provided by the hiring institution, although two of the participants completed preservice at another school. Of the Alberta Learning officials, only Thor had completed a preservice teacher-training course.

Eve believes the three-week preservice teacher training course she took through a neighbouring institution was helpful; "It made me aware of what I was getting into!" She describes the benefits; "They taught a lot of different angles of going about doing things that I didn't realize were behind the scenes . . . I didn't realize all the things that have to go into a lesson plan."

"It's a program designed to teach people how to plan, how to evaluate, and how to prepare courses," remarked Newfie. "I found it to be very beneficial." Newfie has taken two short preservice teacher training courses at different institutions, both of which he referred to in glowing terms.

Steve gave preservice teacher training very high marks, commenting that the skills received were, "Excellent." He was most impressed by the teaching techniques surrounding the delivery of shop courses; ". . . They wanted us to do a hands-on class because that's the type of training we deal with. And that was excellent. And, the structured format and definite time restrictions, with the focus on objectives and the exercises that went along with it was very good. Excellent for us."

Vas had completed the same three-week preservice teacher-training course as Steve. His comments about preservice were equally glowing; "It was absolutely beneficial. It gave me the confidence to stand in front of a group of people and give presentations . . ."

Thor had taken a short preservice teacher training course during the early stages of his instructional career. He found the course to be, "Very, very valuable." He commented extensively on the fundamental importance of

preservice, stating, "It exposed you to at least the core of issues in terms of how you prepare lessons, how you grade lessons, what motivates students to learn." While Thor was extremely positive about preservice teacher training, he noted that the typical preservice course provided by Alberta's postsecondary institutions could be longer; "And I found one month, it could have been on the short side . . ."

While Eli had not participated in a preservice teacher-training program, he had completed teaching practicums for his Bachelor of Education program which he believed were beneficial. Eli expressed concern that preservice teacher training would be better presented over a continuum rather than completely up-front. He stated:

> I think teacher training would be better . . . if it followed more of an apprenticeship model rather than a front-end model. I think people would be more effective and better used if they spent more time in the classroom up front... And then once they've demonstrated their desire to continue, they could take some more formal instruction and bring it back to the classroom.

Vas also expressed an interest in seeing preservice teacher training modified, commenting, "I think we are really throwing them into a teaching environment too quickly."

The beliefs surrounding preservice teacher training held by vocational instructors and Alberta Learning do not differ significantly. All participants felt that preservice programs provided the fundamental teacher training required to make the transition from tradesperson to instructor. A number of the participants commented that modifications to preservice programs might improve overall effectiveness. In summary, the described benefits of preservice teacher training

are seen to far outweigh the detriments. Thor comments about the detriments of failing to provide preservice teacher training to new instructors, observing that, "Altogether too often instructors are hired and popped into the classroom and left to sink or swim. And that's unfair to them and unfair to their students."

Theme Four – Lifelong Learning

A commitment to lifelong learning was believed by all of the participants to be an important part of being a postsecondary vocational instructor. The majority of the responses about lifelong learning were generated during the latter stages of the interview guide when discussing personal professional development. A number of participants made comments that if instructors did not display a personal commitment to learning, they lessened their chances of motivating students to learn. Essentially, the participants felt vocational instructors must live by example. As revealed through their comments, officials from Alberta Learning share similar beliefs.

When asked whether professional development is important, Eve responded that it was important for a vocational instructor to stay current with new technology, because, "The trade is evolving all the time . . . if I don't keep up, I'll get very stagnant." Eve indicated after her interview that she was very willing to participate in further professional development activities, time and money permitting.

Green believes that an instructor's credibility with the students is jeopardized without a clear personal commitment to lifelong learning. He shared that, "It can come across to the students whether on not you're doing the same

thing that you are asking them to do. The basis for that is to try to tell the students to keep improving, keep developing, and keep going on. It's hard to get that concept across when they see that you've reached a certain point, and no further." Green also mentioned that vocational instructors who resist personal professional development have more difficulty adapting to change. He was also quick to point out that professional development can take many different forms, "It doesn't just have to be a formal course where you get a certificate. It can be from reading magazines, working with mentors, or working on projects."

"For me, I would like to have more professional development, more teacher training," related Newfie. He also showed an interest in upgrading his computer skills because he feels like a, "Computer dummy." The constant influx of new technology in his vocation also concerns Newfie, who endorses all opportunities to continue updating his own skills and knowledge. He comments that, "I was walking around one of the trade shows last fall and there was machinery there I've never seen. Just fantastic stuff. I would love to be able to get in and operate them."

Steve believes that professional development is a lifelong journey and commitment, saying that learning, ". . . Has always been a part of what I've been." He has been fortunate enough to participate in a number of unique professional development activities, having taught for short stints in Japan, Austria, and Texas over the past few years. "It's the responsibility of the teacher to upgrade," shared Steve. He made the point that vocational instructors should be constantly upgrading or updating their skills as a tradesperson and a teacher;

"I think culinary teachers feel that as long as they have good cooking skills, that's enough. But that's not necessarily correct. They may really need to work on their teaching skills."

"Professional development is absolutely essential," commented Vas. He enjoys going to seminars, sharing that he often gains more knowledge by watching the presenter than in the seminar topic, " . . . I want to see how it's handled from the first fifteen minutes when the instructor walks in, how he introduces himself, how he sets the tone for the rest of the seminar." Vas also believes that mentoring new instructors with seasoned teachers would be a beneficial form of ongoing professional development.

"Yes, I think it's critical," shared Eli. He believes that professional development should be interpreted as broadly as possible, commenting, "I think it's got to be based on need . . . I think you have to approach it from an individual perspective . . . maybe it's learning more about industry, or going back into industry to find out what it's like to be out there." Eli observed that vocational instructors should be constantly upgrading their skills to reflect new technologies. He shared, "Specifically, the media and communication types of skills, and the ability to use media in effective ways. Computers, presentations, all that kind of stuff. It's right there at your fingertips and I don't see any reason why it shouldn't be used."

According to Thor, ongoing professional development activities are highly desirable. He believes that vocational instructors should never stop learning about their chosen vocation and in the skill of teaching, summarizing that, "It's

important for them to be on top of the changing technology involving their particular craft . . . and then there's pedagogical development . . . the skill development as a professional teacher or instructor." Thor thinks postsecondary institutions should have clear expectations of instructional development, and that the current system of awarding merit pay increments should be based on bona fide professional development as opposed to, "Having lived another year longer."

"They've got to keep upgrading themselves if they want to do the job to the best of their ability," shares Kirk. He also believes that vocational instructors should place special emphasis on continuing to develop their occupational skills. Kirk indicated that many companies continually provide upgrading on the latest technologies, and are, "Happier than hell to come out and put on courses." He believes that the onus for continual learning rests on the vocational instructor, "What you put in place this year is no longer valid next year . . . instructors must have the knowledge, the ability to grasp new material and relate it to the students."

All of the participants linked ongoing professional development with the concept of lifelong learning. Participants also agreed that professional development, both vocational and pedagogical, should be expected of vocational instructors. Further, they agreed that professional development could be individualized to reflect unique needs. While the participants were quick to point out the many virtues of ongoing professional development, two vocational

instructors expressed they would only partake in activities if time and money permitted.

Setting a learning example. This inductive subtheme emerged from the interview data, and relates to a postsecondary vocational instructor's attitudes toward teacher preparation. All five vocational instructors emphasized the importance of professional development and lifelong learning. They stressed the need not only to be vocationally and pedagogically competent, but also to set a learning example for their students through their own actions.

Summary

In this chapter, the findings are reported according to the contextual information and emergent themes gathered from analysis of the interview sessions. The description of context is organized according to the demographic information of the participants from the two postsecondary institutions and Alberta Learning, followed by thumbnail sketches of each individual. Specialized occupational knowledge, personal and interpersonal management skills, preservice teacher training, and lifelong learning make up the emergent themes. One subtheme that emerged inductively from the data was the importance of professional development and lifelong learning.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Data acquired in the conduct of this study provided evidence concerning teacher preparation from the perspectives of instructors and government officials actively engaged in postsecondary vocational education in Alberta. The findings, alluded to in the preceding chapter, will now be discussed in the context of the literature. Conclusions, reached in response to the research question posed, are then presented. Based on these results, recommendations for practice and research complete this chapter.

Overview of the Study

As Goodman (1996) noted, over the past ten years, the Government of Alberta has led the drive to diversify the economy by stimulating businesses to bring value-added production, high technology and knowledge-intensive services to the Province. This shift in economic emphasis from a natural resource-based economy toward a knowledge-based economy has a direct impact on postsecondary vocational instructors, who are faced with the daunting challenge of preparing students for work in this new era.

Vocational instructors in Alberta have traditionally been hired directly from business and industry to teach in postsecondary institutions. While many postsecondary institutions offer new instructors preservice teacher training, the Province does not require these instructors to obtain any further teaching credentials (Alberta Colleges Act, 1998, Technical Institutes Act, 1996).

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of the study was to examine teacher preparation from the perspectives of instructors and government officials actively engaged in postsecondary vocational education in Alberta. Knowing how these two stakeholder groups understand teacher preparation has important implications for understanding whether postsecondary vocational instructors have the skills required to prepare their students for the globalization of the Alberta economy known as the *Alberta Advantage*. The major research question guiding the study was: What preparation for teaching do postsecondary vocational instructors and Alberta Learning perceive to be needed to teach in Alberta postsecondary institutions?

Participants

Selected departments of Alberta Learning and two provincial postsecondary institutions in central Alberta were chosen for this study. I elicited expert nomination of participants through consultation with appropriate officials at the respective institutions and at Alberta Learning. Interviewees were first contacted by telephone for verbal confirmation of participation in the study. Following the telephone conversation, letters were forwarded to each participant outlining the details of the study. A copy of the consent form appears in Appendix A.

Interview Schedule

Interview schedule content was based on the major research question. Various demographic questions were also added to the interview schedule, as displayed in Appendix B and C.

For each group of participants, the interview questions were divided into two distinct areas. The first area was comprised of four questions, and was devoted to the collection of basic information. The first question served as an icebreaker, asking the participants to introduce themselves. Question two asked about the participant's instructional experience, while questions three and four detected the formal qualifications of the participant. The second area of the interview schedule elicited a variety of responses about teacher preparation. The first two questions focused on the personal qualities participants believed were essential to be hired as a vocational instructor. The next two questions asked about employability skills. Questions five through eight investigated beliefs about teaching methodology. The final four questions solicited thought about professional development. In all of the questions, emphasis was placed on expanding input about teacher preparation.

Questions and procedures for the interviews were based on the literature review and were designed to answer the research question. The interview schedule was developed and pilot tested in March, 1999. Ethics approval was obtained from a University of Alberta Review Committee in the spring of 1999.

Research Method

A qualitative interview research design was chosen to obtain data for the study. The sample consisted of five postsecondary vocational instructors and three officials from Alberta Learning knowledgeable about postsecondary vocational instruction. The eight participants were selected based on their availability, their willingness to participate, and their knowledge and experiences with vocational instruction and teacher preparation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with postsecondary vocational instructors and officials from Alberta Learning who were knowledgeable about postsecondary vocational instruction. Each interview session was audiotaped and an interview schedule was used to guide the participants through the questions. Reflective notes highlighting participant responses were completed after each interview.

The purpose of the interviews was explained to the participants; they were informed that the interviews would be audiotaped and they could opt out of the interview anytime. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

Transcripts of the taped interviews were read, coded, and emerging themes determined. The coded transcripts were placed into *The Ethnograph* software and sorted based on the themes assigned. The basis for theme development was derived from competency clusters presented in the Conference Board of Canada's *Employability Skills Profile* (1998).

A series of competencies found within the *Employability Skills Profile* (1998) served as the framework for presenting the findings for the research question. Quotations were taken from the transcripts to illustrate each theme.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

A compilation of the demographic information revealed the following information about the participants. Of the participants who are postsecondary vocational instructors, all were actively teaching in Alberta postsecondary institutions, with experience ranging from one to twenty-five years. Four of the five vocational instructor participants were male, with ages of all the participants ranging from 35 to 55 years. Three of the vocational instructors interviewed served as teacher-coordinators for their respective programs. All of the instructors had worked extensively in the occupational environment they were teaching. Of the participants from Alberta Learning, two out of three had experience instructing in a post secondary vocational institution. In addition, two of the officials had extensive post secondary education, both within their trade designation and in teacher education. All of the participants from Alberta Learning were male, with ages ranging from 30 to 64.

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of the data; (a) specialized occupational knowledge: the personal belief system that specialized occupational knowledge provided the basic foundation from which postsecondary vocational instructors became teachers, (b) personal and interpersonal management skills: the participant's strong beliefs that specific personal and interpersonal management skills are necessary components of vocational teacher preparation, (c) preservice teacher training: how vocational instructors rely on short, preservice programs to give them the teaching skills required to make the transition from tradesperson to instructor, and (d) lifelong learning: the

participant's beliefs that ongoing professional development in both occupational and teaching subject areas was a desired attribute of a postsecondary vocational instructor. One subtheme, setting a learning example, emerged inductively from the lifelong learning theme.

To facilitate dialogue on the four emergent themes, the skills and competencies found in the *Employability Skills Profile* (1998) were used as a basis for discussion. The rationale behind using the competencies found in this profile was that; (a) the profile was developed and endorsed by more than fifty of Canada's leading corporations, (b) the profile reflects the effect of globalization on the Canadian economy, (c) the skills and competencies listed in the profile have been developed for the *entire* Canadian workforce, which includes postsecondary vocational instructors, and (d) all of the skills listed in the profile are already either explicit or implicit in general education goal statements of the provinces and territories. Summaries of the participants' responses to the major research question for each of the competency clusters follow.

Specialized occupational knowledge. A two-part cluster of competencies was identified in the *Employability Skills Profile* (1998) as critical skills required of the Canadian workforce. The competencies are: (a) effective use of technology, tools and information systems, and (b) to access and apply specialized knowledge from skilled trades or technologies.

The findings of this study showed that a person's occupational background served as the pivotal reason for being hired as a postsecondary vocational instructor in Alberta. Participants believed that specialized

occupational knowledge provided the foundation from which postsecondary vocational instructors learned to become teachers. Participants constantly referred to specific occupational tools and information believed to be essential to their preparation to becoming a vocational instructor. This finding supports the literature (AAVIM, 1989) confirming that most postsecondary instructors in North America are hired because of their occupational expertise.

While the five vocational instructors who participated in this study had considerable occupational expertise, they had little combined teacher education. While these participants had received rudimentary preservice teacher training at the point of hire, few mentioned additional training in the use of *teaching* technology, tools and information. Specialized teaching knowledge with regards to student-centred learning was difficult, and sometimes impossible, for participants to describe. This finding is in congruence with the 1994 National Assessment of Vocational Education report to the American Congress that determined across many studies that extensive occupational expertise confers no particular benefits on vocational training, and that vocational instructors would be better off with more formal teacher training (Lynch, 1996).

Personal and interpersonal management skills. The *Employability Skills Profile* (1998) contains a series of personal and interpersonal management skills required of the Canadian workforce. These competencies are: (a) communication, both oral and written, (b) personal qualities of positive attitudes and behaviours, (c) self-management qualities of responsibility and adaptability, and (d) interpersonal skills required to work with others.

Communication skills were frequently cited by participants as important to vocational instructor preparation. This finding supports the NAITTE (1996) report that vocational instructor preparation should include enabling skills concerning communication. Most participants commented that effective communication skills greatly enhanced instructional effectiveness. An instructor's ability to use vocabulary or terminology common in the workplace was seen as very important to student success. Oral communication skills were more frequently mentioned than any other literacy skill.

Positive attitudes and behaviours toward learning and occupation were described as personal qualities required of a vocational instructor. While a few participants described positive attitude in terms of work ethic, others explained it as self-confidence. A positive attitude toward learning was consistently mentioned as a necessary quality of a vocational instructor.

Time management was cited by several participants as a desirable self-management quality of postsecondary vocational instructors. Others noted the importance of being able to plan and manage not only time, but also money and other instructional resources. Two participants noted that vocational instructors are responsible for providing a safe learning environment for students. Finally, a positive attitude toward change was mentioned on many occasions, as an adaptability skill desirable in a vocational instructor.

The ability to work with others, particularly students, was mentioned throughout the interviews as an important dimension of a postsecondary vocational instructor. While not completely understood by all, many participants

described teaching methodologies used to develop a host of team skills within their students.

The participants held widespread beliefs about the positive benefits that come from strong personal and interpersonal management skills. These skills were believed to greatly improve the chances of becoming an effective instructor. They were used in varying combinations, depending on the nature of the particular job activity. The findings are consistent with and supported by many bodies of literature (Hartley & Wenting, 1996; Centko, 1998; Fabiano, Laplante & Loza, 1998), indicating that personal and interpersonal management skills are critical to the role of a postsecondary vocational instructor.

Preservice teacher training. For most of the participants preservice training was their only source of formal teacher training. Vocational instructors rely heavily on preservice teacher training programs to provide the fundamental teaching skills required to enter the classroom as an instructor. Similar to the specialized occupational knowledge theme previously mentioned, preservice teacher training aligns with the Employability Skills Profile (1998) under competencies about the foundational skills and technologies required to progress on a job. Here, the specialized knowledge is teacher education.

Typically, the participants described in-house preservice teacher training programs offered at the point of hire that are three to four weeks in duration. Most of the participants described the completion of preservice teacher training as a condition of employment. Critical teaching skills, such as planning lessons and preparing instructional materials, were frequently mentioned as vital

components of preservice teacher training. This finding correlates with AAVIM (1989), reporting that short, preservice "crash courses" frequently are the only form of mandatory teacher training provided to or expected of postsecondary vocational instructors.

The beliefs surrounding preservice teacher training held by vocational instructors and Alberta Learning officials did not significantly differ. All participants felt that preservice programs provided the survival teacher training skills they needed to make the transition from tradesperson to an instructor. Several of the participants commented that modifications could be made to preservice that could improve its effectiveness.

Lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is described in the *Employability Skills Profile* (1998) as "continuing to learn for life." The participants in the study believed ongoing professional development in both occupational and teaching subject areas was an important characteristic of postsecondary vocational instructors. The findings related to lifelong learning were very consistent between the vocational instructors and officials from Alberta Learning. All of the participants linked ongoing professional development with lifelong learning. This correlates with the findings of Carroll (1997), who concluded postsecondary vocational instructors in Alberta require a mindset of lifelong learning. Participants also agreed that continuous learning, both vocational and pedagogical, should be required of vocational instructors. These findings are consistent with and supported by the Alberta Teachers' Association (1991), who concluded that, "Teachers have the responsibility to review periodically their own

effectiveness and to seek improvements as part of a continuing process of their professional development."

A subtheme emerging from the final theme was *setting a learning example*. While the participants were quick to point out the virtues of lifelong learning, few had completed professional development activities. While one vocational instructor spoke of completing professional development related to his vocation and another had recently completed his Bachelor of Education degree, the others simply expressed *interest* in lifelong learning. Some clearly stated that they would engage in professional development activities only if time and money were provided. None of the participants were required to undertake professional development activities as a condition of employment. These findings are consistent with the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) and Daugherty (1997), who concluded that professional development expectations of postsecondary instructors are distressingly ad hoc.

Conclusions

This study attempted to better understand the preparation of Alberta postsecondary vocational instructors from the perspectives of practitioners and government officials. Knowing how these two groups distinguish teacher preparation has important implications for understanding whether the Provinces' postsecondary vocational instructors are ready for the challenges posed by the *Alberta Advantage*. In addition, by uncovering various conceptualizations of teacher preparation, identifying conflicting perspectives held by the two groups may be possible.

This study has produced a number of important findings from which the following conclusions are drawn.

1. Specialized occupational skills. While the recruitment of individuals with strong, specialized occupational skills is cited as the major hiring criteria, the practice may also be viewed as having an inherent weakness, because virtually no emphasis is placed on the acquisition of teaching skills.

2. Personal and interpersonal management skills. Even though specialized occupational knowledge was regarded by the participants as the most important skill that prepares a person to become a postsecondary vocational instructor, it was acknowledged that other personal qualities, attitudes, and behaviours are also important.

3. Preservice teacher training. While preservice teacher training was regarded by most respondents to be a critical component of postsecondary vocational instructor preparation, inservice teacher training was classified as optional. It is reasonable to conclude that expectations with regards to inservice teacher training could be enhanced.

4. Setting a learning example. The respondents believed postsecondary vocational instructors should be lifelong learners in continuous pursuit of occupational and teaching knowledge. Theoretically, their own actions will provide a learning example for their students. While the importance of lifelong learning is recognized, few of the participants actively engage in professional development activities.

5. Perceptions about teacher training. All of the respondents mentioned the importance of specialized occupational knowledge and various personal and interpersonal management skills as components of postsecondary vocational instructor preparation. Preservice teacher training was regarded to be vital to the preparation of new vocational instructors, as was ongoing professional development. Based on these findings it is reasonable to conclude that perceptions about teacher preparation held by postsecondary vocational instructors and officials from Alberta Learning who participated in this study are similar.

6. Vocation over teaching. A subtheme that emerged from the major research question related to postsecondary vocational instructors beliefs about teacher preparation. Based upon the findings of the study, I conclude that vocational instructors place greater emphasis on their designated occupation than they do teaching, because the participants in this study; (a) were hired on the basis of their occupational expertise, (b) are not required to pursue formal teacher training in addition to preservice programs, and (c) demonstrate little motivation to pursue ongoing professional development. While participants spoke consistently of their dedication toward their chosen occupation, teacher training was frequently regarded as work in progress, to be learned while on the job in the classroom.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice and research are presented below. They have been drawn from the conclusions that are based on the findings of the study.

Practice. Several recommendations for practice about the preparation of postsecondary vocational instructors are presented.

1. Improve recruitment practices. This recommendation is based upon the conclusions pertaining to specialized occupational skills and personal and interpersonal management skills. If vocational instructors are required to teach a full range of employability skills, they should possess specialized occupational skills combined with personal and interpersonal management skills at the point of hire. With this in mind, it is imperative that special attention must be paid to recruitment. Effective methods of recruitment must be used to identify the required skill set of prospective vocational instructors. For example, proper screening methods must be used to identify candidates with appropriate employability skills. Essentially, recruitment methods should not only examine the candidate's specialized occupational skills, but also the personal and interpersonal management skills that enhance suitability toward teaching.

2. Progressive professional development. The conclusions about teacher training and setting a learning example are combined to provide a recommendation encompassing professional development. Serious consideration should be made by Alberta postsecondary institutions to raise expectations concerning the professional development of vocational instructors.

Instructors must be adequately prepared to perform well as representatives of their particular occupation *and* in their teaching role. There is a need to devise and implement professional development strategies giving postsecondary vocational instructors the training and support required – not just to survive, but to flourish. This recommendation is presented in a series of stages, which follow:

Stage one, professional development plans. There are many things postsecondary institutions can do to help vocational instructors improve and expand their competence. A vital activity in this area should include a long-range professional development plan for every vocational instructor. A qualified resource person should work with the vocational instructor to assess his or her technical *and* teaching needs, and prepare a written plan that will help vocational instructors achieve the additional skills and knowledge required. Postsecondary institutions could show their support in professional development plans by providing release time, encouraging short-term work experience, and reimbursing tuition fees.

Stage two, internships. Postsecondary institutions should consider on-site internships as an adjunct to existing preservice teacher training. An internship program could include specific competencies the institution wants instructors to demonstrate. A program of this nature can also be highly individualized to meet the specific needs of individual instructors, programs, and schools. A local mentor with recognized teaching credentials could act as a master instructor. The master instructor could be designated as a resource person, available to work with the new teacher on a daily basis if needed. The mentor could also

observe the new instructor's classes regularly and advise him or her on suitable teaching strategies and techniques. A further benefit of this approach is that it is offered on-site for instructors who have actual classes where they can practice and show their skills. Intern instructors would also have a resource person available for consultation and moral support whenever required.

Stage three, commitment to lifelong learning. Vocational instructors should be willing to exceed the professional development expectations currently placed upon postsecondary vocational instructors. They should serve as role models by not only encouraging others to participate in learning activities, but by participating in such activities themselves. A demonstrated personal commitment toward lifelong learning may be an excellent performance objective that can serve as the basis for merit pay increases, rather than by years of employment. As stated by Thor, "Living a year longer should not warrant a pay increase."

Recommendations for Future Study

Several recommendations for additional research on the preparation of postsecondary vocational instructors are presented:

1. This study focused on only two Alberta postsecondary institutions that offer vocational training. Therefore, the understandings about the preparation of postsecondary vocational instructors revealed in these institutions are specific and cannot be transferred to other postsecondary institutions. Other similar studies would need to be conducted at other institutions to assess if similar

beliefs about postsecondary vocational instructor preparation exist across other institutions.

2. There would be value in conducting a case study of employers of vocational students and past graduates, two other groups with perceptions and beliefs about postsecondary vocational instructor preparation, to further determine the transferability of this study.

3. Additional research should be undertaken to study the recruitment process used by postsecondary institutions to hire vocational instructors.

Implications

All of the recommendations that have been presented have implications in terms of time and cost. If the above recommendations were carried out, the following people at postsecondary institutions would be affected: (a) vocational instructors yet to be recruited, (b) existing vocational instructors, (c) educational leaders, (d) educational administrators, and (e) human resources officials. The time and money needed to carry out the above recommendations would be substantial; however, the benefit to the postsecondary system should outweigh the investment.

Personal Reflections

I fervently believe that teaching is a profession. According to the Winston Canadian Dictionary, a profession is, "A calling or vocation, especially one that requires a special education" (1974, p. 496). This study was driven by my personal belief that the special education required by postsecondary vocational instructors must combine related occupational knowledge with teacher education.

While the study findings do not precisely match initial beliefs, the results appear to provide evidence that the accepted practice of hiring vocational instructors solely based on occupational skills requires judicious deliberation. I believed at the outset of this study that postsecondary vocational instructors need to be well prepared in terms of teacher preparation. At the conclusion of this study, my belief has not wavered. Through the completion of my Bachelor of Education degree, I became aware that Alberta Learning is responsible for teacher certification, yet that does not seem to follow through for postsecondary vocational instructors. The demands placed upon vocational instructors to produce highly employable graduates capable of flourishing in an increasingly global economy are enormous. Officials of Alberta Learning need to recognize that teacher preparation does not occur by osmosis. Herbert Kohl succinctly states: "No one starts out as a completely effective and creative teacher ... the desire to teach and the ability to teach are not the same thing. With the rarest of exceptions, one has to learn to become a good teacher" (Maggio, 1997, p. 42). The direct benefactors of any improvements to the existing system of postsecondary vocational teacher preparation will be the people of Alberta.

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Appendix A

Consent Form for Participants

Preparation of Alberta Postsecondary Vocational Instructors

I give permission to the researcher to include me in the study. I understand that the information collected on the audiotape will be reported anonymously and will have no effect on the outcome of this study. I understand that no data collected will be reported in an identifiable manner. Lastly, I understand that my participation in this study is ***voluntary*** and I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

_____

Researcher's Name

_____

Researcher's Signature

_____

Date

_____

Participant's Name

_____

Participant's Signature

_____

Date

Appendix B

Sample Interview Schedule – Instructors

Could you please introduce yourself?
Did you have any teaching experience prior to becoming an instructor at _____?
What sort of formal educational or trade qualifications do you possess?
Have you completed any formal teacher preparation?
    Where and when did you receive teacher preparation?
    If yes, do you think your teacher preparation was beneficial? Why?

Why do you think you were hired as an instructor at _____?
Do you think your trade experience alone sufficiently prepared you to teach at a postsecondary level?
What kinds of skills do you consider to be the most important to teach your students?
    How do you teach these skills?
What kind(s) of skills do you feel add value to a students overall employability?
What teaching methodology(s) do you most frequently use in the classroom?
Why do you use that particular methodology(s)?
What role do you feel values and beliefs play in your choice of teaching methodology?
Do you think it beneficial to students for instructors to use learner-centered teaching methods?
Do you think professional development is important?
    If yes, what specific type of professional development.
    If no, why.

As an instructor, do you consider it important update or upgrade your trade-related skills? Your teaching skills?
Do you think newly hired instructors require skills not expected of you when you were hired?
Do you think additional teacher preparation might help you to become a better instructor?

Appendix C

Sample Interview Schedule – Alberta Learning

Could you please introduce yourself?
Did you have any teaching experience prior to becoming an instructor at _____?
What sort of formal educational or trade qualifications do you possess?
Have you completed any formal teacher preparation?
    Where and when did you receive teacher preparation?
    If yes, do you think your teacher preparation was beneficial? Why?

What do you believe to be the most important qualities of a postsecondary vocational instructor?
Do you think trade experience alone sufficiently prepares a person to provide vocational instruction at a postsecondary level?
What kinds of skills do you consider to be the most important to teach postsecondary vocational students?
    How should these skills be taught?
What kind(s) of skills add value to a postsecondary vocational students overall employability?
What teaching methodology(s) are most frequently used in postsecondary vocational classrooms?
Why do you think those particular teaching methodology(s) most frequently used?
What role do you feel values and beliefs play in a postsecondary vocational instructors choice of teaching methodology?
Do you think it beneficial to students for postsecondary vocational instructors to use learner-centered teaching methods?
Do you think it important for postsecondary vocational instructors to participate in professional development activities?
    If yes, what specific type of professional development.
    If no, why.
Do you believe it important for postsecondary vocational instructors to update or upgrade their trade skills? Their teaching skills?
Do you think newly hired postsecondary vocational instructors require additional skills not required ten years ago? Specifically, what kinds of skills?
Do you think additional teacher preparation would help postsecondary vocational instructors become a better teachers?